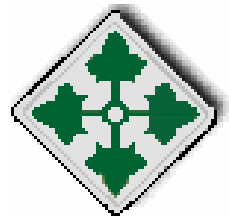




DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 8th Infantry
4th Infantry Division (Mechanized)
Forward Operating Base Kalsu, North Babil, Iraq



16 May 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Specialist Marcus Gaston and I joined the Army on August 6, 2002. I am currently stationed at Echo Forward Support Company, 2-8 Infantry, 4th Infantry Division. I went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for basic training. After successful completion of basic training I attended Advance Individual Training (AIT) at Fort Jackson to be trained in the MOS field of a Heavy Wheel Mechanic. After completion of AIT I was selected to attend Hotel Eight (Recovery) as my MOS identifier. I was then moved to Alpha Company (Gator Nation) 704 Division Support Battalion for a month before we were deployed to support the 4th Infantry Division in Operation Iraqi Freedom. There I was further trained as a heavy and light wheel mechanic before I was bestowed with the honor of a recovery vehicle. As a part of the recovery section I ran many mission as maintenance support and as a recovery asset. I returned to the states for 18 months to spend time with my family and train to return back to Iraq. I redeployed to Iraq with Echo Company 204th, 2-8 Infantry on November 14, 2005.

I joined the Army because I was unsure what I wanted to do with my future. In my time in the Army I learned a trade as a heavy and light wheel mechanic, responsibilities to my family and my career as a soldier, and matured as an adult. While in the military I will strive to become a great leader and mentor for younger soldiers entering the military. I also plan to further my education in physical education so I can pursue a career as a high school football coach.

I have four goals for my first military enlistment, to pay off a vehicle, become a Noncommissioned Officer, start a family, and own a home. I have accomplished three of the four and I plan on completing my goal before my four years are up. I never made a goal that wasn't unachievable, but goals are made to be a challenge and these goals have made me into a better person by just learning lessons from trying.

Our main mission on FOB Kalsu is the same as any FOB to maintain the safety of Iraq and its people. While at the same time we must maintain our equipment to make sure at any time that it is mission capable. Everyone has a role in the FOB but we all must stay proficient with our basic combat skills to protect ourselves, comrades, and civilians working with the Coalition. We must get the Iraq soldiers trained so that they can protect themselves and defeat the enemies within their country.

Marcus S. Gaston
Specialist, US Army